

**EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT**

1. An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it MUST be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

Authorization for this examiner's amendment was given in a telephone interview with William C. Gehris on December 3, 2009.

The application has been amended as follows:

In claim 20, line 16, "stationary and" has been deleted and on line 17, "with a stationary gripper or gripper rollers" has been inserted after "complete manner."

***Allowable Subject Matter***

2. Claims 20-38 are allowed.

3. The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance: The claims recite a method and an apparatus for automated application of a self adhesive paint film. The method for the automated application of a self-adhesive paint film to a bodywork part secured in a defined position using a freely programmable industrial robot provided with an application tool, the paint film being held ready in a multi-layered film composite in a further defined position in the working region of the industrial robot for picking up into the application tool using suction grippers, the multi-layered film including a protective strip on an adhesive side of the paint film and being provided with a contact piece attached on an end side, the protective strip being grasped at the

contact piece and removed from the paint film, the paint film being held taut, and the adhesive side is thus exposed and the paint film being held taut being aligned in a precise distance position above the bodywork part to be covered, and, from a visible side of the paint film, with the paint film held in a fixed position over the bodywork part to be covered, the paint film is pressed progressively onto the bodywork part from the spaced-apart, taut position owing to a line of application moving over the paint film, the method comprising: securing a rectangular section of the multilayered film composite protruding on all sides over the bodywork portion to be covered on all four sides in the application tool; removing the protective strip on the adhesive side from the paint film in a complete manner with a stationary gripper or gripper rolls, and as the paint film is pressed on in a pressing-on operation, keeping the paint film under tensile stress at least transversely to the direction of the pressing-on operation as the pressing on operation continues. The apparatus for the automated application of self-adhesive paint film to a bodywork part secured in a defined position, the paint film being contained in a multi-layered film composite including, apart from the paint film itself, at least a protective strip on an adhesive side of the paint film with a contact piece protruding on an end side and being connected to the protective strip, the device comprising: an application tool capable of being manipulated by a freely programmable industrial robot and capable of handling the paint film or the film composite and applying the paint film to the bodywork part; the application tool including a suction gripper forming a picking-up plane via active suction surfaces, the paint film or the film composite capable of being picked up from a held- ready flat position into the application tool in a taut state

via the suction gripper, the suction gripper being capable of handling the paint film or film composite; a device for grasping the contact piece on the end side and for removing the protective strip on the adhesive side from the tautly-held paint film to expose the adhesive side; the application tool including a press-on doctor or press-on roller moveable in a longitudinal direction of the paint film and capable of being lowered from a rest position, in which the press-on doctor or press-on roller is moved away from the picking-up plane, into a working position situated in a region of the picking-up plane, in which case the paint film, which is aligned in a precise distance position above the bodywork part to be covered, is capable of being pressed progressively onto the bodywork part from the spaced-apart position at a predetermined force using the press-on doctor or press-on roller, the film composite containing the paint film being designed with regard to its outer contours as a rectangle protruding over the bodywork portion to be covered on all sides, the suction gripper being designed as a rectangular suction frame corresponding to a size of the film composite and capable of securing the film composite on all four sides, the device for grasping the contact piece on the end side of the film composite being a stationary gripper or gripper rolls for positionally fixed securing of the contact piece with which the protective strip on the adhesive side is capable of being removed from the tautly-held paint film in the application tool, owing to a relative movement of the application tool in relation to the stationary gripper or gripper rolls or a pull on the grasped contact piece. None of the prior art of record discloses removing a protective or cover liner from an adhesive film using a stationary gripper or gripper rolls with the paint film being held taut by the tool.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to SING P. CHAN whose telephone number is (571)272-1225. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Thursday 7:30AM-11:00AM and 12:00PM-4:00PM.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Philip C. Tucker can be reached on 571-272-1095. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/Sing P Chan/

Acting Examiner of Art Unit 1791

/Philip C Tucker/  
Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art Unit 1791